

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 4669

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: MRS. GANDHI'S MARCH 20 LETTER TO BHUTTO

REF: NEW DELHI 4668

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF INDIAN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA
GANDHI'S MARCH 20 LETTER TO PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER
BHUTTO:

QUOTE. DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

1. I HAVE RECEIVED YOUR LETTER OF THE 25TH FEBRUARY.

WE HAVE GIVEN CAREFUL ATTENTION TO YOUR VIEWS ON THE
US GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO LIFT THE ARMS EMBARGO AND
ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE STATE OF JAMMU KASHMIR.

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2. WE WELCOME YOUR ASSURANCE THAT PAKISTAN CONTINUES

TO LOOK ON THE SIMLA AGREEMENT AS THE BASIS FOR DEVELOPING GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. FROM OUR SIDE, WE FEEL STRONGLY THAT THE SIMLA PROCESS SHOULD NOT BE IMPEDED, MUCH LESS SUFFER A SET-BACK. THE AGREEMENT AND THE SUBSEQUENT CONCRETE INITIATIVES DEMONSTRATE OUR SINCERE DESIRE TO BUILD A NEW RELATIONSHIP OF UNDERSTANDING, AND COOPERATION. THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT REGARDING OUR FIRM INTENTION IN THIS REGARD.

3. HOWEVER, IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICTS ON THE SUBJ-CONTINENT, AND THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF AMERICAN WEAPONS AGAINST INDIA, THE US GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO RESUME ARMS SUPPLIES HAS EVOKED STRONG PUBLIC REACTIONS IN INDIA. WE HAVE REGRETTED THIS DECISION BECAUSE IT THREATENS ONCE AGAIN TO INCREASE TENSIONS IN OUR REGION. WE AGREE WITH YOU THAT EACH COUNTRY MUST HAVE LEGITIMATE CONCERN FOR ITS SECURITY AND FOR THE MEANS TO PROTECT ITS INDEPENDENCE. HOWEVER, YOU HAVE TALKED ABOUT THE DISPARITY IN DEFENCE CAPABILITY BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. ON THIS MATTER WE HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES SOME SEARCHING QUESTIONS. IS REAL STABILITY TO BE BASED ON PARITY OF ARMS, WITHOUT CONSIDERING A COUNTRY'S SIZE, ITS LAND FRONTIERS AND COASTLINE AND DIVERSE PROBLEMS? WILL NOT SUCH A QUEST GENERATE AN UNENDING SEARCH FOR AND ACQUISITION OF WEAPONS AND LEAD ONLY TO GREATER TENSIONS AND THE WEAKENING OF ECONOMIC ENDEAVOURS? IT WOULD BE ILLUSORY TO THINK THAT SUCH AN ARMS RACE COULD BE HALTED AT SOME ACCEPTABLE LEVEL. IT IS MORE LIKELY TO RESULT IN HEAVIER BURDENS AND IMPEDIMENTS TO THE ECONOMIC PROGRESS OF OUR RESPECTIVE PEOPLES.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT A GENUINE AND LASTING SENSE OF SECURITY BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES CAN BEST EMERGE THROUGH SELF-RESTRAINT AND A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO BUILD MUTUAL CONFIDENCE. IT CAN BE FACILITATED BY A FIRM COMMITMENT TO NON-AGGRESSION AND TO NON-USE OF FORCE, WHICH WAS ENVISAGED IN THE SIMLA AGREEMENT. WE ARE PREPARED TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE METHODS OF BUILT-IN SAFEGUARDS TO REDUCE TENSIONS AND TO AVOID LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE LIKELIHOOD OF FUTURE CONFLICTS. GIVEN AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST, SUCH MEASURES CAN GO HAND-IN-HAND WITH MEASURES OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION.

5. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, I CANNOT BUT EXPRESS OUR REGRET THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE WHOLLY MIS-INTERPRETED THE ACCORD REACHED WITH SHEIKH ABDULLAH AND HIS COLLEAGUES. I CANNOT SEE HOW THIS VIOLATES THE SIMLA

AGREEMENT. THIS DEVELOPMENT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES TO WHICH WE ARE WEDDED. THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE HAVE OVERWHELMINGLY WELCOMED SHEIKH ABDULLAH AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT. MOREOVER, WE FEEL THAT THIS ACCORD SHOULD FACILITATE NORMALISATION BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND INDIA. THE HIGH LEVEL EXCHANGES BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS IN NOVEMBER 1973 AND JANUARY 1974, AND YOUR OWN SUGGESTION OF A LINE OF PEACE IN JAMMU & KASHMIR, ENCOURAGE US TO SEE THIS DEVELOPMENT AS A HELP RATHER THAN A HINDRANCE IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS. BUT IN FRANKNESS I MUST TELL YOU THAT WE ARE DEEPLY DISTURBED AT THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS STEP HAS BEEN MISCONSTRUED BY YOUR GOVERNMENT AND BY THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AND CALL FOR AGITATION AND HARTAL ACROSS THE LINE OF CONTROL. THIS CAN ONLY VITIATE THE PROSPECTS OF EARLY NORMALISATION.

6. REGARDING CIVIL AVIATION, WE HAD INVITED YOUR DELEGATION TO COMMENCE TALKS IN NEW DELHI ON THE 10TH FEBRUARY BUT THIS DATE WAS NOT CONVENIENT FOR YOUR SIDE. YOUR SUGGESTION FOR AN EARLY MEETING IS BEING EARNESTLY CONSIDERED AND I HAVE ASKED OUR OFFICIALS TO TRY TO ARRANGE TALKS IN THE MONTH OF APRIL, SUBJECT TO MUTUAL CONVENIENCE. IN THE MEANWHILE, WE HOPE THAT THE ATMOSPHERE WILL BE CONDUCIVE FOR CONSTRUCTIVE TALKS.

7. WE FEEL STRONGLY THAT BOTH OUR COUNTRIES MUST DESIST FROM PROPAGANDA AGAINST EACH OTHER. NOTHING CAN BE MORE DAMAGING TO THE PROSPECTS OF COOPERATION AND THE FULFILMENT OF AGREEMENTS ALREADY REACHED THAN THE RESUMPTION OF HOSTILE PUBLIC POSTURES. FROM OUR SIDE I CAN ASSURE YOU WE WILL DO NOTHING TO ENCOURAGE SUSPICION AND HOSTILITY TOWARDS PAKISTAN AND I HOPE YOUR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO EXERCISE SIMILAR RESTRAINTS.
WITH BEST REGARDS, YOURS SINCERELY, (SD) INDIRA GANDHI.
END QUOTE.
SAXBE

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